

CONNECT:

The Newsletter of Ayrshire College

WELCOME:

Welcome to the first edition of **CONNECT**: – our monthly update to staff, students and stakeholders on progress towards the merger of Ayr College, James Watt North Ayrshire Campuses and Kilmarnock College.

In addition to welcoming you to our first Merger Newsletter, we would also like to invite you to **CONNECT**: with the merger process by taking the opportunity to send questions and suggestions to connect@ayrshire.ac.uk

The contribution and feedback of staff, students and stakeholders is critical to the success of the merger process and will help us to make sure that we are able to deliver our collective vision for Ayrshire College.

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the first edition of the **CONNECT newsletter which will provide you with an update on the progress of the creation of the new Ayrshire College.**

February marked several important dates for the merger process as the Ayrshire Partnership Board and the respective college boards were presented with the business case for merger which sets out an ambitious and exciting future for Further and Higher education in Ayrshire.

11 February : Business Case approved by the Ayrshire Partnership Board

19 February : Business Case approved by the Boards of Management of Ayr College, James Watt College and Kilmarnock College

21 February : Scottish Funding Council visited Ayrshire to meet with Board members, staff and students to discuss our vision for the College as well as progress on the merger process so far.

The feedback from the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) team was very positive. The SFC welcomed the honest views of all of those who participated in the visit and they will now present the Business Case to the SFC Board on 15 March, 2013.

The three colleges continue to demonstrate that despite the many challenges in achieving this ambitious goal in a challenging economic climate, we have the strength, determination and vision to deliver our objectives.

The APB are continually impressed by the tremendous work undertaken by the staff of the three colleges on the various merger work-streams. We receive monthly updates from our Project Manager, Sharon Driver and are confident in achieving our shared goal of the August Vesting Date. We have much to do over the coming months before vesting day and much to do after it. We are however confident that Ayrshire College will thrive and make a significant impact on the challenges that face our community.

COMING SOON

PRINCIPAL DESIGNATE VISIT TO EACH OF THE COLLEGES.

STAFF EVENTS ON THE PRINCIPAL DESIGNATE'S VISION FOR THE NEW MERGED COLLEGE.

CULTURAL STUDY.

VISION VALUES AND VOICE WORKSHOPS – PART 2.



Steve Brannagan
REGIONAL LEAD



Derek Little
CHAIR, JAMES WATT COLLEGE

Wai-yin Hatton
CHAIR, KILMARNOCK COLLEGE

Mr. W. Mackie
CHAIR, AYR COLLEGE

WELCOME TO OUR PRINCIPAL DESIGNATE

Heather Dunk, Principal of Kilmarnock College since 2008, has been appointed Principal Designate of the new regional Ayrshire College with effect from 1 March.

The Ayrshire Partnership Board and the individual college Boards of Management are pleased to welcome Heather Dunk as Principal Designate for Ayrshire College. Heather Dunk said: "I am absolutely delighted to be given this opportunity. It is a privilege to be appointed Principal Designate and I look forward to leading the new Ayrshire College which is being established from three very successful colleges with a strong history in Ayrshire. Together, we will build on the solid foundations in place in Ayrshire and I look forward to working with students, staff and stakeholders to create one of the most successful colleges in the UK."

Steve Brannagan, Regional Lead for Ayrshire, said: "I'm proud to have someone of Heather's calibre and experience to lead the merger process through to the creation of the new college and beyond. Together we will create a new, vibrant and truly innovative college for Ayrshire."

Willie Mackie, Chair of Ayr College, said: "We at Ayr College welcome Heather to the post of Principal Designate and are looking forward with confidence as we progress into this exciting new chapter."

Derek Little, Chair of James Watt College, said: "I am delighted to see Heather appointed as Principal Designate. This is a strategic decision which will be hugely beneficial to the new regional college"

Waiyin Hatton, Chair of Kilmarnock College, said: "This appointment is key to the success of the new Ayrshire College. Heather has the vision, enthusiasm and commitment to inspire learners and engage with all stakeholders to ensure the best opportunities for the whole of Ayrshire."

We look forward to Heather's contribution to the next edition of **CONNECT**: as Principal Designate.

HAVE YOUR VOICE HEARD:

This is the dawn of a new era for the students of Ayrshire, an era that is bright and full of opportunity. The Student Associations are working extremely hard to ensure that every opportunity is taken to build on our collective experience and improve the student experience across Ayrshire. The Student Associations will work in partnership with staff to engage students in all Ayrshire college activities and to ensure that the student voice is heard. This is the opportunity for the student body to influence the shape of the new Ayrshire College.

The Associations will be asking all Ayrshire Colleges' students for their help and opinions between now and August and it is vitally important that you take your opportunity to have your voice heard.

Steven Fegan Ayr College,
Sharon Rennie James Watt College, **Mary Palmer**, Kilmarnock College,
Student Presidents

This is your chance to aid change for the better...

TAKE IT!





CONNECTING COLLEGES

There are many benefits to merger and one of the most significant is pooling our talent and sharing best practice from the three partner colleges in Ayrshire from a staff, student and stakeholder perspective.

The colleges in Ayrshire have worked together on many initiatives in recent years as part of the Ayrshire Learning Partnership. Connecting across the colleges to move towards merger has provided the opportunity for staff and students to get involved and work together to build a vision for the regional college.

Cross college workstreams have been created to work with the Principals and Project Manager to identify critical activities for merger and to develop action plans to ensure that the necessary infrastructure and processes are in place for Vesting Day and beyond.

Here is a quick summary of some of the progress so far.

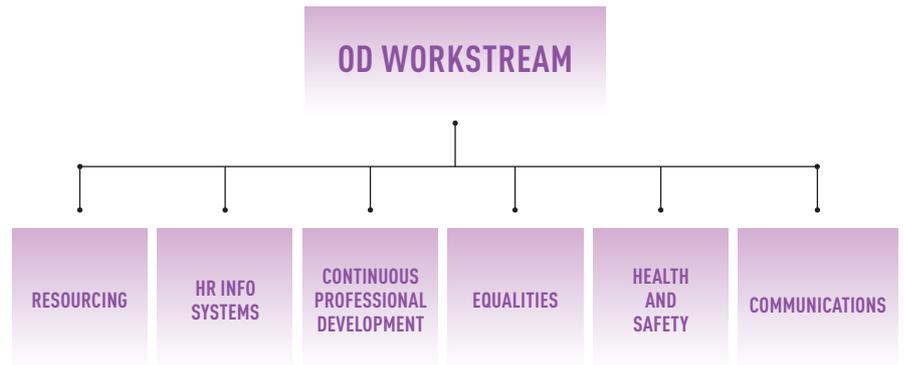
The Ayrshire Partnership Board (APB) completed financial and legal due diligence for the merger and are awaiting feedback from cultural due diligence. This will be undertaken when the assignment of staff from James Watt is completed.

Branch Representatives from UNISON and EIS/FELA have been meeting with Heather Dunk and these have been positive and enabled information to be shared.

NEXT STEPS

Vision Values and Voice workshop outcomes were used to inform the public consultation document and provided feedback to the APB. In order to engage staff in the next phase of merger activities, a series of workshops will be held in April and May.

The cultural study will take place in February and March and all staff will have an opportunity to contribute.



Organisational Development (OD) Workstream Update

KEY FOCUS

The work of the OD workstream covers all aspects of Human Resources and Organisational Development functions across the three colleges including Engagement, Enhancing Performance, Governance, Management Information Systems, Remuneration and Recognition and Resourcing.

A key element in moving the activities of the workstream forward is the assignment of staff from James Watt College to the Ayrshire Region. This work is due to be completed by the end of February and will enable a range of other actions to be taken forward including further cross college staff events.



CURRICULUM WORKSTREAM UPDATE

The work of the Curriculum Workstream involves all aspects of curriculum and quality across the three colleges.

KEY FOCUS

Our focus in taking forward the activities of this workstream is to ensure that Ayrshire College offers a broad and balanced curriculum across the three campuses that will deliver even more opportunities for everyone, provide the skills needed to support employment and economic growth and meet the broader needs of Ayrshire's communities.

We've been focussing on the Regional Outcome Agreement (ROA) for 2013-14 as well as the progression of activities related to the 2012-13 ROA, particularly those associated with 'right learning in the right place', 'high quality and efficient learning' and 'a developed workforce'.

Another key activity has been the review of the curriculum across Ayrshire. Curriculum planning discussions will ensure that our students have the best opportunities available to develop their learning and skills and are well prepared to continue that development beyond their Ayrshire College experience.

Our Marketing group reviewed existing prospectuses and has now published a mini-prospectus, which gives a list of planned programmes and the campus

at which they will be offered. This will soon be supported by an online regional prospectus providing full information on all courses on each of the college's existing websites.

College websites are accepting applications for all programmes. But you won't see much difference between what is currently on offer at each campus and what is planned for next session. That is a deliberate plan to ensure consistency of provision and progression as we enter into these exciting new times!

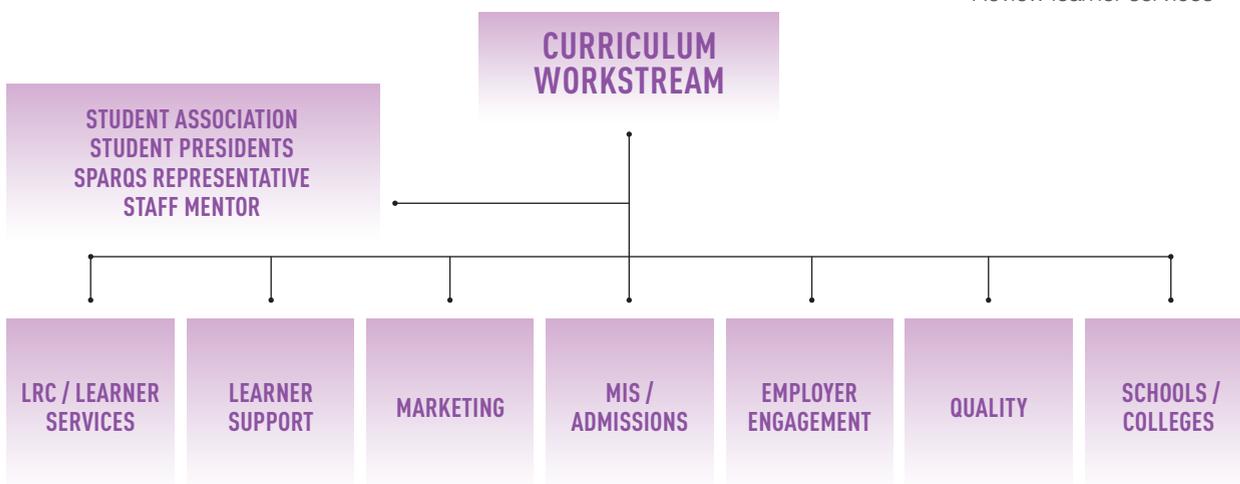
Our Admissions group has developed a standardised admissions process for 2013-14. One of the many benefits of a single college for Ayrshire is a more straightforward pathway for students from application onwards, and in preparation for this the group reviewed and aligned entry criteria for the same or similar full time courses being offered at Ayr, Kilmarnock and/or Kilwinning campuses.

So, if you wish to apply to more than one campus for the same or similar course (and while a separate application to each will be required for the time being) the qualifications and/or experience you will need will be exactly the same.



NEXT STEPS

- Planning joint marketing events
- Review the provision for meeting the needs of our employed workforce and create a customer relationship map and a training directory
- Proposing regional school/college link programmes and marketing materials
- Reviewing regional progression routes to university
- Reviewing enrolment, retention, completion and success rates to agree common monitoring and reporting strategies.
- Review learner services



CROSS COLLEGE NEWS

KILMARNOCK COLLEGE STUDENTS SHOW THEY HAVE HEART



Kilmarnock College students have taken a practical approach to their coursework by launching "Heart 2 Heart", a British Heart Foundation charity shop located within the College.

As part of an exciting "Apprentice" style task, the College's Skills for Employment and Skills for Learning students have been busy collecting unwanted goods in a bid to raise money for the British Heart Foundation.

Carol Nisbet, Head of Access and Inclusion at Kilmarnock College, said: "The British Heart Foundation carries out invaluable research aimed at preventing heart disease – we are delighted to be supporting such a worthy cause."

JAMES WATT CREDIT UNION

Students at James Watt College's North Ayrshire campus have launched a new financial support programme to help encourage students to save more and avoid loan sharks.

The NC Business and Accounting students have set up the Credit Union Access and Information point 'JWC Money 1' in partnership with 1st Alliance Ayrshire. It will offer facilities from the North Ayrshire College campus and will be run on a day-to-day basis by a team of dedicated 1st Alliance (Ayrshire) Credit Union staff and JWC students.

JWC Money 1 has been set up after the students were awarded a £500 grant from Lloyds Banking Group's Money for Life Challenge.

Remarking on the students' success, Acting Principal Alastair Milloy said: "I am delighted to see James Watt College students working on such a positive venture for the good of the college's local community."

Katy Clark, MP said: "Credit Unions provide a safe and affordable alternative and it is fantastic that the college and its students are promoting financial literacy and offering a valuable service to the community at this difficult time. Working with 1st Alliance Credit Union I am sure the project will be a huge success for the students at James Watt College."



AYR COLLEGE CONSTRUCTION STUDENTS ROCK!

The HNC Construction Management class had a blast (literally) on a recent trip to Hillhouse Quarry. Quarry Manager, Gary Jones showed the group the result of using 8 tonnes of explosives to bring down a section of whinstone, allowing them full access to the quarrying process. The students followed the stones' progress through the crushing and screening plants, seeing how it is utilised in concrete block manufacture and tarmac production.

PROJECT MANAGER UPDATE MILESTONES TO MERGER



SHARON DRIVER

The workstreams and subgroups are working incredibly hard on merger activities as well as on their day to day roles. We are making positive progress to plan and each group is now producing reports that are used to track progress and provide status reports to myself and the Principals on a fortnightly basis and to the APB on a monthly basis.

The workstreams and subgroup membership consists of senior management, operational staff and students across each of the partner colleges. This supports our vision to build on the existing strengths and best practice of the three partner colleges whilst applying existing knowledge to ensure that we work towards a seamless transition for staff, students and stakeholders throughout the merger process.

There are many layers to the merger plan – the following table shows the **Key Merger Milestones** that we are currently working on to support the merged college as of 1 August 2013.

MERGER MILESTONES

Business Case	STATUS
Compile Business Case for Ayrshire	COMPLETE
Approval by Boards	COMPLETE
SFC Visit	COMPLETE
Approval by SFC / Recommendations to Cabinet Secretary	ON PLAN
Cabinet Secretary Approval	ON PLAN
Submit Parliamentary Paper	ON PLAN
Parliamentary Approval	ON PLAN

CRITICAL MERGER ACTIVITIES

Merger Planning	STATUS
Set up cross college workstreams	COMPLETE
Agree critical activities for merger to prepare systems and policies for the merged college	COMPLETE
Appoint Principal Designate	COMPLETE
Set up Student Association Structure	ON PLAN

Strategic And Financial Planning	STATUS
Compile and agree budgets with the Scottish Funding Council	COMPLETE
Agree model for merger	COMPLETE
Agree a joint plan with the West to integrate JWC North Ayrshire Campuses into Ayrshire	ON PLAN

Communication And Consultation	STATUS
Agree our cross college communication strategy	COMPLETE
Conduct Merger Consultation	COMPLETE
Confirmation of the College name	COMPLETE
Develop our new brand	ON PLAN
Launch our regional Newsletter	COMPLETE
Publish the Business Case on the Regional Website for staff, students and stakeholders	ON PLAN





AYRSHIRE COLLEGE STRIDES INTO NEW HOME

Ayrshire College, Kilmarnock Campus was presented with ten acres of land on the former Diageo site last week.

Diageo donated the land to the College after a proposal for the construction of a new £50 million campus on the site of the town's former bottling plant.

Heather Dunk, Principal Designate of Ayrshire College, said: "This is another important step forward in inspiring our next generation of learners.

"This partnership will greatly help the College to proceed with its plans to develop a world-class campus in the town."

FINANCE

The work of the Finance workstream covers all aspects of Finance, Estates and Procurement functions across the three colleges.

The main work to date for this workstream has been:

- Legal and Financial due diligence processes
- Established a baseline budget for the new college
- Established a five year financial plan for the merged college
- Developed the financial strategy for the merged college
- Overseeing of procurement processes
- Manage Scottish Funding Council Merger funds

The five year financial plan which forms part of the formal business shows that the merged college is financially sustainable and able to continue to invest in its staff, students, facilities and other resources even in this challenging financial environment.

Next Steps

- Developing a more detailed budget for the new college
- Developing a new set of financial regulations, financial policies and procedures to ensure ongoing financial control and sustainability
- Working with the ICT Team to review key finance system functionality and make recommendations for systems integration after Vesting Date



Information Communications and Technology (ICT)

The work of the ICT workstream covers all aspects of the IT environment to maintain continuity of service up to merger and beyond. The ICT workstream plays a vital support role across the colleges for day to day business for staff and students.

Look out for an ICT Special in next month's issue of **CONNECT: CONNECTING AYRSHIRE**.



For further information on the work of the workstreams and subgroups, go to www.ayrshireregionalcollege.co.uk

